



## Project UNIFY Arizona Fact Sheet

### What is Project UNIFY?

Project UNIFY is a U.S. national project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Its goal is to activate young people around the country in an effort to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change — fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities by utilizing the programs and initiatives of Special Olympics.

### Who is involved?

Project UNIFY is for students, teachers and educators who believe:

- there should be more opportunities for young people of all ages and all ability levels in schools across the country to make friends and work together for change.
- students with intellectual disabilities should become part of the core fabric of the education community and be perceived as assets in their school and community.
- students without intellectual disabilities can and should increase their knowledge, skills and comfort in forming positive social relationships with students with intellectual disabilities and come together to address societal issues.
- policymakers and education leaders should develop policies and support quality practices which encourage positive school climates with safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.

### What is happening in Arizona?

Special Olympics Arizona's (SOAZ) focus for Project UNIFY is school-based Unified Sports® growth in which inclusive sports programs are used as a means to develop character, service, social experiences and understanding. Unified Sports® combines people with and without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. Awareness for the sports programs is also driven through youth leadership initiatives such as the Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign ([www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)), Fans in the Stands, Youth Activation Committee and other youth leadership initiatives.

### Why get involved?

Project UNIFY impacts lives, changes attitudes about people with intellectual disabilities and creates a culture of inclusion and understanding in school communities.

Registering with Special Olympics Arizona for Project UNIFY enables schools to request Project Unify funds for uniforms, sports equipment, Unified medals and other training and competition expenses.

### How do I get involved?

Visit [www.SpecialOlympicsArizona.org](http://www.SpecialOlympicsArizona.org) to learn more about Project UNIFY and Unified Sports®  
Contact Tracy Roberts, SOAZ Unified Sports® & Young Athletes Program Manager at 602-476-0839 or [Tracy@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org](mailto:Tracy@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org)  
Volunteer with Unified Sports® or help start a school-based Unified Sports® Program  
Visit [www.R-Word.org](http://www.R-Word.org) to take the r-word pledge and learn about coordinating a campaign  
Visit [www.SpecialOlympics.org](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org) and join the Fan Community



## **Arizona Education Leaders Network**

Project UNIFY is a U.S. national project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Its goal is to activate young people around the country in an effort to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change — fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities by utilizing the programs and initiatives of Special Olympics.

With the goal of wide-scale implementation of Project UNIFY initiatives and adoption of Project UNIFY values of inclusion, respect and youth leadership; Special Olympics Arizona will develop the Arizona Education Leaders Network (AELN.) The AELN will be comprised of high level personnel from Arizona education institutions and associations.

The expressed purpose of the Arizona Education Leaders Network is to:

1. Communicate the importance and impact of inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in the larger picture of school and community
2. Communicate the Special Olympics programs that provide opportunities for inclusion and youth leadership
3. Receive communication and invitations for Special Olympics presentations at District and State level meetings and conferences
4. Inspire education leaders and provide them with the tools and information needed to affect changes in policy that foster respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities

The following state-level leaders will be invited to join the Arizona Education Leaders Network:

- Executive Director, Arizona School Boards Association
- Executive Director, Arizona School Administrators
- President, Arizona School Administrators, Secondary Division
- Executive Director, Governor's Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
- Arizona Department of Education, Executive Director, Special Education Advisory Panel
- Executive Director, Arizona Interscholastic Association
- Principal from a Project UNIFY school
- Arizona Department of Education Service-Learning Coordinator
- Arizona Department of Education, Character Education
- Director, Arizona Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism
- Governor's Office of Youth, Children and Families - Director, Division for Community & Youth Development
- Executive Director, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education
- Executive Director, Arizona Association of Student Councils
- A student leader from the Arizona Association of Student Councils



**Special Olympics**  
Arizona

**Unified Sports® Program**

*Team sports are about having fun, promoting physical health and bringing people together. Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams do all of that – and shatter stereotypes about intellectual disability in the process.*

### **Bringing People Together**

In communities around the world, from the United States to Southeast Asia, Special Olympics athletes and their teammates without intellectual disabilities practice and play together on Unified Sports® teams.

Unified Sports® is a moving and exciting initiative for higher ability athletes of all ages, from youth to adults. Mixed teams provide the public direct opportunities to experience first-hand the capabilities and courage of Special Olympics athletes.

By having fun together in a variety of sports ranging from basketball to golf to figure skating, Unified Sports® athletes and partners improve their physical fitness, sharpen their skills, challenge the competition and help to overcome prejudices about intellectual disability.

### **Inspiring Leadership**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is fun for all ages – but is particularly powerful as an educational tool in schools. Special education teachers have reported the program to be extremely effective at integrating youth, promoting physical activity and inspiring leadership. One teacher reported, “I’ve seen more interaction on the field today between classmates than I’ve seen in my classroom all year.”

### **Unified Sports® In Arizona**

Special Olympics Arizona has chosen to focus on five core sports for Unified Teams: Basketball, Cheerleading, Flag Football, Soccer and Volleyball.

Contact Tracy Roberts, Unified Sports® & Young Athletes Program Manager at 602-476-0839 or [Tracy@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org](mailto:Tracy@SpecialOlympicsArizona.org) for more information.



*Unified Sports® Brings People Together*



# youngathletes™

Special Olympics Arizona (SOAZ) Young Athletes Program is a series of developmentally appropriate activities designed specifically for children ages 2½ to 7 with intellectual disabilities, their family members and schoolmates. The Young Athletes Program's fun, flexible play activities help develop necessary building blocks, such as balancing, jumping, catching and kicking. These building blocks result in notable improvements in motor, cognitive, social, emotional and communication skills.



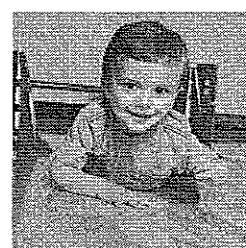
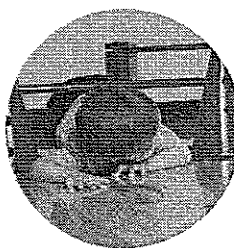
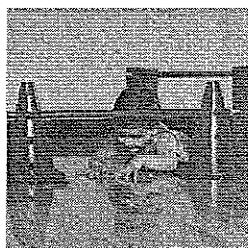
Community groups meet once a week or more at locations throughout Arizona. Activities are led by trained volunteers and parents help facilitate their child's involvement. There is no charge to participate; Young Athletes is fully funded through Special Olympics and our community partners and sponsors.

The Unified Young Athletes Program and Equipment are available to educators to use in Preschool through 2nd Grade Special Education classrooms. Unified programs include classrooms of children without disabilities as Partners, thus fostering understanding and inclusion at an early age.

For more information, please contact Special Olympics Arizona.

602.230.1200

[www.SpecialOlympicsArizona.org](http://www.SpecialOlympicsArizona.org)



## Young Athletes Program Highlights

- 2½ to 7 year olds with intellectual disabilities and their peers without disabilities
- Specially designed Equipment Kit
- Build basic skills such as balance, running, catching and throwing
- Non-competitive
- Inclusive community building
- Available in schools, community groups and to families